DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 084 720 EC 060 412

AUTHOR Anderson, Joann
TITLE Activities for Improving Language and Communication Skills in Young Mentally Retarded Children.
PUB DATE [73]
NOTE 27p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Childhood; *Class Activities; Early Childhood; *Exceptional Child Education; Expressive Language; *Instructional Materials; Language Development; *Language Instruction; *Mentally Handicapped; Receptive Language; Speech Skills; Teaching Guides

ABSTRACT

Presented are 29 activities for teachers to use in helping young mentally retarded children increase language skills, and included is a language assessment chart. The goal for language development is given to be increase in effectiveness and accuracy in handling both receptive and expressive language. Activities are presented by name or purpose, materials needed, procedure, and in some cases variations. Given are activities for identifying sounds, following directions, playing an animal game, playing a noise game, matching objects or pictures, imitating action, recognizing similarities and differences, and responding to soft and loud sounds. Also offered are activities such as responding to whispered instructions, answering questions posed through the medium of a tape recorder, developing extended conversations, and playing guessing games. Other activities included emphasize categorization, experience with tactile blocks, spatial concepts, breath control, picture recall, dramatic play, a puppet show, and telephone use with real telephones (if possible). Directions accompany the language assessment chart which is designed to be a quickly administered individual evaluation for weekly assessment of 32 skills such as referral to self with pronouns and ability to increase volume of speaking voice. (MC)

ED 084720

ACTIVITIES FOR IMPROVING LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN YOUNG MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Prepared by:

Joann Anderson
Pre-School Specialist
Florida Division of Retardation

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ED 084720

INTRODUCTION

It is hoped that the activities on the following pages will help your young mentally retarded children increase their language skills. The goal in language development is not to achieve perfect articulation, nor do we expect sentence structure without flaw. We are striving, however, to increase effectiveness and accuracy in handling language and communication, both understood (receptive) and expressed (expressive).

In building language and communication skills, it is well that we remember that receptive language always preceeds expressive language and that many skills, adjunct to actual speaking, must be developed. The actual speech mechanisms must be strengthened and differentially developed. Listening skills of discrimination, memory and recall must be developed. Breath control and the ability to express wants, needs, and experiences must be developed and practiced. The child's receptive language or basic concepts and knowledge must be increased with as many concrete experiences repeated in as many different ways as possible. Language, at least, is a complex, multifaceted skill.

It is hoped that this booklet will give you some ideas for attacking this teaching area. THIS IS NOT A BIBLE! Add to, delete, modify any of these activities so that they become teaching tools for you.

Sincerely,

Joann Anderson
Pre-School Specialist
Division of Retardation
Tallahassee, Florida

RECEIVED
OCT 24 1973
ORIC EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Drum Rhythms

Materials: Drum, rhythm sticks, hands, etc.

Procedure: Beat a rhythm pattern on instrument. Insist child not begin until teacher finishes complete pattern. Increase or decrease complexity of pattern according to each child's ability.

Activity 2: Identification of Sounds

Materials: Tape recorder and prerecorded tape

Procedure: Record familiar sounds either at random or categorized.

Random Example: Bells, frogs, hammer pounding nail, whipped cream squirted out of pressurized can, etc.

Activity 2 (cont.)

Categorized
Example : Home Sounds - toilet flushing, door closing, telephone ringing, pans banging together, clock ticking and Bell Sounds, etc. - telephone, door bell, church bell, jingle bell, clock, cow bell, etc.

Have children identify sounds, if possible use to initiate discussions of each sound. Suggest use small groups.

Activity 3: Following Directions

Materials: Tape recorder, pre-recorded tapes

Procedure: Prerecord directions for each child, ex. Jimmy, stand up and put the green ball under Tom's chair. Immediately repeat so that child has heard directions twice in succession before he is expected to execute. As children become more adapt, give directions only once. Child must wait until directions are completed before he may begin. Do not let child execute directions as they are given.

Variation: Let the children that are able, record directions for others in the class to follow.

Activity 4: Animal Game.

Materials: Animal pictures

Procedure: Pick two children - one to be the farmer that leaves the room - another to be a lost animal. From the group of animal pictures, the child to be the lost animal chooses the animal he would like to be. He then hides and makes his animal's noise. When the farmer comes in the animal must softly make his sound until he is discovered. The farmer must first guess which animal is hiding and by following the sound find him.

Note: When teaching animal sounds, be consistent in your labeling until children become thoroughly familiar with the terms used. The subtles of age difference between sheep - lamb, cat - kitten, etc. are often difficult for the Mentally Retarded to comprehend and are best explained only when child is ready to handle such similarities and differences. I have found it prevents confusion in the young mentally retarded to say cat (adult) and little or baby cat (rather than kitten). As a child's ability to handle more difficult concepts grows, begin introducing more complex ideas. Examples: The cow is the adult and the calf is the baby. Hen, rooster, and chicks are all chickens differentiated by age and sex.

Activity 4 (cont.)

Variation: Have children respond to the animal pictures by making appropriate sounds as a group, but also individually. After each child has had a chance to respond, encourage a verbal exercise similar to the following: "I choose John to be next." John then selects a picture, the group responds and John chooses someone else.

Variation: Teacher holds up picture and says, "Does a rooster say moo?" "Does a dog say meow?" Let the children answer yes or no. (Begin by requiring mostly yes answers.) If answer is no, always supply correct answer before going on to next item. This format should only be used after the children are very familiar with the animals and their sounds.

Variation: Make up a poem or story that features several animals. Let each child choose to be an animal. When his animal comes up, he must make appropriate noises.

Example: Once there was a little boy that loved animals, he lived in a small apartment, but he wished for many pets. He wished for a chicken, cow, duck, and a lion, ad infinitum.

Activity 5: Who's Making that Noise?

Materials: None

Procedure: A child is chosen to be it and hides his eyes while the rest of the class scatters. The teacher taps another child who makes several predetermined noises (animal, household, etc.). The guesser must open his eyes, recall the direction of the sound in order to accurately guess who made the noise. Before he guesses who, he must guess what.

Activity 6: Matching

Materials: Actual concrete objects, pictures of objects

Procedure: This is best done as a small group or as an individual lesson. Have children first name objects, then pictures. Match objects to pictures telling or demonstrating what is done with each object. Change objects and pictures frequently.

Variation: Remove one or more of either the objects or pictures and have children tell what is missing.

Activity 7: Action Imitation

Materials: Set of Action Pictures

PROCEDURE: Have child imitate action of picture, verbalizing if possible, what he is doing. Coloring books and reading workbooks are good sources of pictures.

Sample Actions:

bicycle riding	jumping rope
swimming	climbing tree
running	etc.

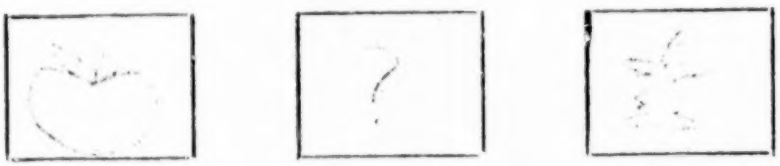
Activity 8: Sequencing

Materials: Make sequence cards. Vary length of story depicted from two pictures to x number, depending on ability of children. Example:

Procedure: Tell a short story (do not use pictures here). Then have children put pictures in order they occurred, retelling story as much as possible.

Activity 8 (cont.)

Variation: Leave off one of sequence. Have children tell what happened in between.



Activity 9: Same and Different

Materials: Sets of picture cards

EXAMPLE

Procedure: Have child choose pictures that are the same. As children become more adept, reduce number of same pictures and/or reduce degree of difference. A variety of series is necessary for this activity.

Activity 10: Soft and Loud

Materials: Bell, drum, whistle, record player, etc.

Procedure: This can be done in a group game structure or on an individual level. Tell children what bodily response is expected. Ex.-When sound is soft, sit down. When loud, tiptoe forward. Change instruments to help pupils generalize the concepts. As children pick up on concept, add medium sound. When introducing this idea, be sure to exaggerate soft and loud so that medium is easily identifiable.

Variation: As children are able to remember directions for three sound levels - soft, medium, and loud - introduce two instruments with a different direction for each sound level on each instrument.

Example:	Drum	Whistle
	soft - tiptoe forward	soft - jump
	loud - tiptoe backward	Loud - touch head

When introducing two instruments begin again only with loud and soft adding medium only after children have mastered the former.

Activity 11: Speech Patterns

Materials: None

Procedure: Teach speech patterns for situations the children will encounter daily. Your goal for each child will vary according to his verbal ability. For a non-verbal child, it is a reasonable goal that he make a noise, a single word, a gesture at the appropriate time. For the more verbal children, your expectations will increase.

Examples of speech patterns to teach: Hello, Thank you, Please pass the milk, No thank you, My name is _____.

For best results structure a role playing situation. The desirability of verbal responses can and should be reinforced during all daily activities.

Activity 12: Whispered Instructions

Materials: None

Procedure: Whisper instructions to children. In order to enhance listening skills, tell class you will whisper direction only once. (repeat only once again if necessary.) If you anticipate a child will have difficulty with this activity, reduce the number of instructions given, rather than increasing repetitions whispered. To give directions repeatedly negates the purpose of this activity which is to develop listening and recall skills.

Activity 13: Fill in the Missing Blank

Materials: None

Procedure: Build up your children's repertory of memorized nursery rhymes, fingerplays, songs, etc. From this repertory say a line from a familiar poem, leaving out a word which the children must supply. This activity and the following variation are often more effective when taped beforehand by teacher.

Variation: Make up a sentence and leave out a word letting the children supply a word from their imagination. Sometimes it will be necessary to provide more context than others. Acceptability of answer will vary with child.

Activity 14: What's Missing?

Materials: Box with lid, assortment of objects - ball, pencil, soap, cup, small doll, etc.

Procedure: Assemble all objects in box. With much flourish, reveal several objects, one at a time. Have class identify each object as it is revealed. The children hide their eyes while you remove one of the objects from the assembled group. When they open their eyes they must guess which one is missing. Be sure to occasionally change the composition of the objects in the group. As they become adept, begin removing several things at once. Be especially careful in this activity that all the children have a chance to participate. It is very easy for one "star" to hog the whole show.

Activity 15: Tape Recorder Activities

Materials: Tape Recorder, Microphone and Tape

Procedure: The list of activities done with a tape recorder can go on ad infinitum. Many of the activities in this booklet can be adapted for this use. A tape recorder has many advantages for working with retarded children. Perhaps the major one being the fascination of hearing a human voice which they can identify as their teacher, classmate, etc. reproduced by a machine. By using this mechanical device, a lesson can be taped, immediately replayed and critiqued.

1. Record and practice social instructions.
2. Record names, addresses, phone number, etc. Stress using sentences by setting up a format such as, "My name is _____. I live at _____. My phone number is _____.
3. Record sounds and words that are the same and different.
4. Have children pre-record verbal portion of a puppet show.

Activity 15 (cont.)

5. Record group or individual directions.
6. Use tape recorder as a means of critiquing teacher/pupil interactions. Leave the tape recorder open for as long as the tape lasts to record classroom activities. A review of the tape can provide some good clues for teacher self evaluation. Ex.-Does the teacher do all the talking? How much actual verbal response is contributed by students?

Activity 16: Conversation Time

Materials: Picture File

Procedure: Choose large, clear pictures of interest. Guide children through a conversation by injecting questions that must be answered other than yes or no. The object of this is to develop conversational skills. This is a particularly good technique to use when working with an individual child with verbal problems.

Activity 17: Guessing Game

Materials: None

Procedure: Give two or three clues about something the class has been studying. Children must guess. As much as possible, encourage answering in a complete sentence. When it is a child's turn to give clues, be sure he clears them with teacher first. Sometimes as the others come close to guessing correctly, the answer somehow changes if the teacher is not able to guide questioning.

Variation: Describe a child in class. He is to stand up when he recognizes himself. It is then his turn.

Variation: Have a child choose a picture from the picture file or an actual object. He must give appropriate clues showing the picture or object to the class when it is correctly guessed.

Activity 18: Categorization

Materials: Pictures or concrete objects

Procedure: Assemble and categorize an assortment of pictures or objects. Decide upon a response required for each category. You may start by asking children to respond to only one category at a time first. You may say "When you see something that belongs in the kitchen, clap your hands."

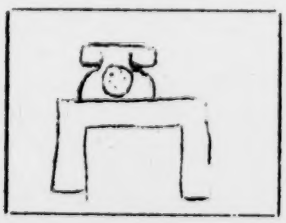
Activity 18

Procedure: (cont.) From your collection show some pictures that require the response and some that are outside the category and do not require the response. As children become more able, increase the number of categories they must sort simultaneously - each requiring a different response.

Variation: Substitute auditory clues for visual clues used above. Slowly name a list of items, some of which require a response, some of which do not.

Variation: Using pictures from picture file or concrete objects, give children practice in categorization. Give each child several pictures or objects which he must place in the correct category.

Example: Inside Outside



Mix cards or objects and go through activity several times giving each child a chance to categorize.

Activity 19: Tactile Blocks

Materials: Scrap blocks of wood (balsa works especially well), large cardboard box with top - textured materials: sandpaper, carpet (shag, sculptured, plain, indoor-outdoor), crumpled aluminum foil, crushed egg shells, thumb tacks, yarn, smooth fabric, etc.

Directions for making blocks: Cover all sides of block with material. Make different shapes and sizes constructing two exactly alike. Use good quality glue because these blocks will receive much handling.

Procedure: Have child feel textured blocks while teacher identifies texture. Next, put several blocks into an open box or in a group on a table top. Have the child identify a block or several blocks that are soft, rough, smooth, scratchy, etc.

Variation: Put one set of blocks in a large box that is closed on all sides but has a hole large enough for a child to comfortably place his arm. Give child a block from the matching set. Have him hold and feel the first block in one hand searching for its mate with his other hand in the box. When beginning this activity make the blocks in the box very different. As they become familiar and adept, increase the similarities and the number of blocks from which to choose.

Activity 19 (cont.)

Variation: Because there are two matching sets, these can be used for very basic visual matching by size, color, shape, and texture.

Activity 20: Building Spatial Concepts

Materials: Large cardboard box and large carpet tile or piece of construction paper.

Procedure: Give directions to individual children: Bobby, sit in the box, Jimmy, stand on the carpet, Sue, stand near the box, etc.

Variation:
Materials: Variety of easily handled objects.

Procedure: Give each child directions to place an object in relation to himself or another child. Example: John, put the hat near Mary. Place the candy under the table near the napkin.

Activity 21: Building Spatial Concepts

Materials: Miscellaneous classroom or playground furniture

Procedure: Construct an obstacle course so that children can experience spatial relationships. Before or after children run obstacle course, have them identify where they will have to go through, under, around, over, etc. Verbal reinforcement is extremely important so that children will connect what they are doing with the concept.

Activity 22: Developing Breath Control

Materials: Ping pong ball and large table

Procedure: Space class around all sides of the table. Blow ping pong ball to person across table. The object is to keep ball moving but on the table. If ping pong ball requires more breath control skills than children have, begin with balls of crumpled cellophane, cotton balls, then graduate to ping pong balls.

Activity 23: Developing Breath Control

Materials: Inexpensive plastic whistles

Procedure: These whistles can be used in innumerable ways, the important consideration being that learning to blow the whistle develops breath control and speech mechanisms. The following activities are suggestions:

Teacher blows a rhythmical pattern on her whistle. Have a child repeat it on his own whistle.

Variation: Have a child blow songs or phrases from familiar songs on his whistle.

Variation: Play a game of Traffic Cop with each child having a chance to be the policeman. Children start around the room, running, skipping, etc., to teacher's direction. Traffic Cop blows his whistle twice in a row and everyone must stop. All that move are out. Policeman blows his whistle three times and class begins moving again.

Variation: To make this game more difficult, assign each different movement a particular number of whistle blasts.

Example: Skip - 2 blasts Run - 4 blasts
Walk - 1 blast Hop - 3 blasts

Activity 24: Breath Control

Materials: Plastic straw, very thin tempera paint, slick paper

Procedure: Drop large droplets of thin paint on a paper that will not absorb the paint immediately. Have child blow through straw in order to "move" or "spread out" paint droplet. Makes a lovely picture for framing and hanging.

Activity 25: Picture Recall

Materials: Conversation Picture File

Procedure: This activity is best done in a small group or as an individual activity. Show a picture to the group without calling attention to any of the particulars. (This may be unrealistic for some groups. It may be necessary to help the group focus attention by at least naming the most important ingredients of the picture.) Let children examine and talk about the picture among themselves. Turn it over and have each child tape record what he remembers of the picture. Help them to recall not just the people, places, or things, but the action and relationships. Play recorder back while they are looking at the picture. Have children access the accuracy of their own statements.

Activity 26: Guessing Game

Materials: Gather an assortment of items: broom, hat, whisk brush, stapler, tape, crayons, etc.

Procedure: Hold up an item. Have child pantomine its use. Children tell whether he is right.

Variation: Have assortment of materials on table. Whisper to a child which one he is to pantomine. Other children must guess which item on the table is it.

Variation: Teacher gives clues. Children must pick from the assortment the item that most closely matches her clues.

Variation: Teacher holds an item. Gives clues, one of which is obviously wrong, but applies to another item in the group. Children must guess which clue is wrong and to which item it applies.

Dramatic play is a very useful technique to use for developing a variety of skills with retarded youngsters. Some of the following are suggestions for using dramatic play in developing language and communication skills.

Activity 27: Dramatic Play

Materials: None

Procedure: There are many everyday and special activities for which the retarded child must be thoroughly prepared. Many of these situations lend themselves to "acting out." For example, if the class is going on a field trip via bus, it is most helpful to act out the situation beforehand. Arrange classroom chairs to simulate bus seating arrangements, etc. Routinely used, this method gives children a chance to solve many problems before they are actually encountered.

Activity 28: Puppet Show

Materials: Puppets made by children, tape recorder

Procedure: Have children make puppets (stick, bag, balloon, etc.) for a familiar story. Have each child record his speaking part on the tape recorder. The advantage of using the tape recorder is that the speech (and it should not be very rigid) can be recorded as many times as the child feels are necessary and he can concentrate on the puppet for the performance. Puppets are sometimes a successful vehicle for evoking verbal response.

Activity 28 (cont.)

Variation: Instead of using puppets, improvise quick costumes (Ex.-a pair of cardboard horns on a crown for a billy goat) and have children act out a familiar story as it is told by the teacher, record, or tape recorder.

Activity 29: Telephones

Materials: Two telephones as realistic as possible

Procedure: Use the telephones to practice real life situations in which a telephone would be necessary or simply enjoyable. Practice telephone manners and etiquette. Be sure to structure the role or situation as clearly as possible.

LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

The following language assessment chart is an adaptation from pages 17-20 of Anne R. Sanford's Learning Accomplishment Profile. It has been designed to be a quickly administered individual evaluation that may and should be repeated often (ex.-weekly) from which teaching goals may be extracted. Further modification may be necessary to make it a useful tool for your program. It is imperative in order to set realistic goals and to accurately access a child, that his vision and hearing be thoroughly examined by personnel familiar and experienced in working with, and eliciting responses from mentally retarded children.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE

When using this evaluation form record the date behavior was first noticed under NEVER, SOMETIMES, USUALLY. Each time a child is evaluated go through the entire list of items. In order to insure a degree of uniformity within your program, decide how to define the evaluation terms of NEVER, SOMETIMES, and USUALLY. You may decide for instance that 3 out of 10 times constitutes SOMETIMES, and 7 out of 10 times would be USUALLY. It is important that all staff members that w'll be involved in using this evaluation use the same criterion.

It may be helpful when deciding language goals for each child, that a check mark be placed in front of each item number determined for a goal. Because goals will be changing continually, why not make the check marks in pencil?

LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

N = Never
S = Sometimes
U = Usually

	N	S	U
1. Babbles using series of syllables			
2. Imitates speech sounds			
3. Imitates single words			
4. Uses single words on own			
5. Combines two words			
6. Uses nouns and verbs together			
7. Uses 3 or 4 words together			
8. Refers to self using pronouns			
9. Makes wants known through			
a) gestures			
b) verbal expressions			
10. Can name ordinary household or classroom objects			
11. Can label objects and people in pictures			
12. Verbally greets teachers and classmates			
13. Can conversationally relate action in a picture			
14. Can verbalize personal experiences so they are understood			
15. Can say first name			

	N	S	U
16. Can say first and last name			
17. Can say address			
18. Can say phone number			
19. Can say age and birthday			
20. Can follow gestures of fingerplay			
21. Can recite most words or familiar poem, song, etc.			
22. Responds to sounds			
23. Can locate sources of sounds			
24. Recognizes familiar songs, music, games, etc.			
25. Can follow one direction			
26. Can follow two step direction			
27. Can follow three step direction			
28. Can follow multiple step direction			
29. Can whisper at will			
30. Can increase volume of speaking voice at will			
31. Can use straw efficiently for drinking liquids			
32. Chews and swallows food			

Evaluator's Comments and Dates: